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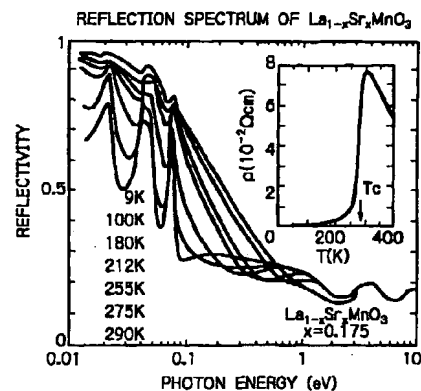
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(54) Heat flux control device

(57) A small size, lightweight heat control device feasible for an artificial satellite or a spacecraft is disclosed. The heat control device uses an optical property particular to a substance itself in place of a mechanical principle applied to a conventional thermal louver. In addition, the device of the present invention is highly reliable and long life because it needs no movable portions which would bring about wear, fatigue and other problems.

Fig. 2



Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a heat control device and more particularly to a heat control device feasible for, e.g., an artificial satellite or a spacecraft.

[0002] As for a spacecraft expected to navigate a vacuum environment, heat radiation from outside surfaces is the only heat radiating means available. The amount of heat radiation dictates the temperature inside the spacecraft. A thermal louver has customarily been used for maintaining temperature inside the spacecraft adequate. The thermal louver adjusts the amount of heat radiation to the outside in accordance with temperature. Specifically, the louver includes a bimetal or similar actuator for driving blades. The blades are movable to increase or decrease the effective area and therefore the temperature of heat radiation surfaces, i.e., increase the amount of heat radiation at a high temperature or reduces it at a low temperature.

[0003] However, the above thermal louver is a mechanical device including movable portions and therefore bulky and heavy. Moreover, the louver lacks in reliability due to the movable portions. In addition, the blades cannot be opened and closed more than a preselected number of times due to their limited life.

[0004] Technologies relating to the present invention are also disclosed in, e.g., Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication Nos. 63-207799, 1-212699 and 9-58600.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a reliable heat control device operable over a long period of time even in a severe environment and easy to produce.

[0006] It is another object of the present invention to provide a reliable, small size and light weight heat control device including no movable portions.

[0007] In a heat control device of the present invention, a variable-phase substance exhibiting a property of an insulator or a property of metal in a high temperature phase or a low temperature phase, respectively, and radiating a great amount of heat or a small amount of heat in the low temperature phase or the high temperature phase, respectively, controls the temperature of a desired object.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] The above and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description taken with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 shows a conventional thermal louver;

FIG. 2 is a graph showing a reflection spectrum par-

ticular to a variable-phase substance $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$ applicable to the present invention:

FIG. 3 is a graph showing resistivity

FIG. 4 is a graph showing data representative of the reflectivity of $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$; and

FIGS. 5 and 6 respectively show a first and a second embodiment of the heat control device in accordance with the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0009] To better understand the present invention, brief reference will be made to a conventional thermal louver, shown in FIG. 1. The thermal louver to be described adjusts the amount of heat radiation to the outside in accordance with temperature, as stated earlier. As shown, the thermal louver includes a bimetal or actuator 10 and blades 12. The bimetal 10 drives the blade 12 in order to increase or decrease the effective area and therefore the temperature of heat radiation surfaces. There are also shown in FIG. 1 a frame 14, a bimetal housing 18, shafts 18, and bearings 20.

[0010] A heat control device in accordance with the present invention is characterized in that it uses a heat radiation characteristic particular to a substance itself in place of a mechanical principle. As for a spacecraft expected to navigate a vacuum environment, heat radiation from outside surfaces is the only heat radiating means available. The amount of heat radiation dictates the temperature inside the spacecraft.

[0011] The heat control device of the present invention is implemented by a variable-phase substance ($\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$) arranged on the heat radiation surfaces of a spacecraft. The variable phase substance belongs to a family of oxides of perovskite Mn and undergoes phase transition around room temperature. The characteristic of this kind of substance is similar to the characteristic of metal in a low temperature phase, but similar to the characteristic of an insulator in a high temperature phase. Also, the heat radiation ratio of the substance is low when conductivity is high, but high when conductivity is low. The substance therefore has an automatic temperature adjusting ability, i.e., automatically increases its heat radiation ratio at high temperatures and decreases it at low temperatures. FIG. 1 shows the dependency of the resistivity and infrared reflectivity of $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$ on temperature, reported in the past. As FIG. 2 indicates, the reflectivity noticeably changes with changes in temperature around photon energy of about 0.12 eV (10 μm) which is the peak of heat radiation around room temperature. The phase transition temperature is variable between 250 K and 350 K in accordance with the composition ratio x of La and Sr.

[0012] FIG. 3 shows data representative of the hemispherical reflectivity of $\text{La}_{0.825}\text{Sr}_{0.175}\text{MnO}_3$ and measured in the range of from 170 K to 380 K. As shown, the reflectivity sharply changes in the range of from 300 K

to 280 K, i.e., at the phase transition temperatures. As a result, the above substance exhibits the characteristic of metal at the low temperature side, but exhibits the characteristic of an insulator at the high temperature side.

[0013] FIG. 4 shows data representative of the result of measurement of resistivity. As shown, the resistivity changes by about four times as in FIG. 2.

[0014] In the heat control device of the present invention, the variable-phase substance should only be arranged on heat radiation surfaces in the form of a film and is therefore space-saving and light weight. Moreover, the device is highly reliable because it needs no movable portions. When the device is mounted in a position getting the sunlight, a silicon plate transparent for thermal infrared rays, but opaque for the sunlight, may be positioned in front of the variable-phase substance in order to minimize the sunlight absorption of the device.

[0015] For the variable-phase substance, use may be made of an oxide of Mn-containing perovskite represented by $A_{1-x}B_xMnO_3$ where A denotes at least one of La, Pr, Nd and Sm rare earth ions, and B denotes at least one of Ca, Sr and Ba alkaline rare earth ions. Further, such a substance may be implanted by an oxide of Cr-containing corundum vanadium, preferably $(V_{1-x}Cr_x)_2O_3$.

[0016] Referring to FIG. 5, a first embodiment of the heat control device in accordance with the present invention will be described. As shown, the device is implemented by a variable-phase substance 1 for controlling the temperature of a desired object 2. The substance 1 exhibits the characteristic of metal in a high temperature phase, but exhibits the characteristic of an insulator in a low temperature phase. Also, the substance 1 radiates a great amount of heat in the high temperature phase, but radiates a small amount of heat in a low temperature phase. The substance 1 is affixed to the object 2 by powder coating, evaporation, crystalline adhesion or similar affixing means. In the illustrative embodiment, the substance 1 is implemented by $La_{1-x}Sr_xMnO_3$ belonging to a family of oxides of perovskite Mn.

[0017] Specifically, the object 2 is representative of the heat radiation wall of a spacecraft. The substance 1 is arranged on the surface 3 of the wall 2 in the form of a several hundred micron thick film. The substance 1 is thermally coupled to the surface 3 and substantially the same in temperature as the wall 2.

[0018] In operation, when the temperature of the surface 3 rises and heats the substance above the phase transition temperature, then the heat radiation ratio of the substance increases. As a result, the amount of heat radiation to the outside environment increases and lowers the temperature of the surface 3. Conversely, when the temperature of the surface 3 drops and cools off the substance below the phase transition temperature, the heat radiation ratio of the substance 1 and therefore the amount of heat radiation decreases, rais-

ing the temperature of the surface 3. With this mechanism, the substance 1 automatically controls the temperature of the surface 3 to a range around its phase transition temperature.

[0019] The substance 1 has a cubic crystal structure and has an optical property not dependent on the orientation of the crystallographic axis. It follows that the substance 1 can be arranged on the surface 3 by any one of conventional schemes including powder coating, evaporation, crystalline adhesion and other affixing means and the adhesion of a film implemented by a powdery phase-variable substance containing, e.g., a binder.

[0020] The illustrative embodiment is practicable only if the variable-phase substance is implemented by, e.g., an oxide of Mn-containing perovskite represented by $A_{1-x}B_xMnO_3$ where A denotes at least one of La, Pr, Nd and Sm rare earth ions, and B denotes at least one of Ca, Sr and Ba alkaline rare earth ions. Further, such a substance may be implemented by an oxide of Cr-containing corundum vanadium, preferably $(V_{1-x}Cr_x)_2O_3$.

[0021] A second embodiment of the heat control device in accordance with the present invention will be described with reference to FIG. 6. As shown, the device is also implemented by the variable-phase substance 1 for controlling the temperature of the object 2. The substance 1 exhibits the characteristic of metal in a high temperature phase, but exhibits the characteristic of an insulator in a low temperature phase, as stated earlier. In addition, the substance 1 radiates a great amount of heat in the high temperature phase, but radiates a small amount of heat in a low temperature phase, as also stated previously. In the illustrative embodiment, a silicon plate 4 transparent for infrared rays, but opaque for visible rays, is positioned on the substance 1.

[0022] As shown in FIG. 2, $La_{1-x}Sr_xMnO_3$ constituting the substance 1 has reflectivity as low as about 0.2 in the sunlight wavelength range (0.3 μm to 2.5 μm), i.e., it shows high absorbance to the sunlight in such a range. Therefore, when the substance is positioned in an area directly getting the sunlight, its absorbance is increased to obstruct heat radiation. In such a case, as shown in FIG. 6, the silicon plate 4 transparent for infrared rays, but opaque for visible rays, is mounted on the front of the substance 1. This embodiment is therefore identical in principle with the first embodiment except that the silicon plate 4 reflects the sunlight.

[0023] If desired, the silicon plate 4 maybe replaced with any other member, e.g., a plate or a film containing germanium so long as it can transmit infrared rays.

[0024] In summary, it will be seen that the present invention provides a small sized, light weight heat control device using an optical property particular to a substance itself in place of a mechanical principle applied to a conventional thermal louver. In addition, the device of the present invention is highly reliable and long life because it needs no movable portions which would

bring about wear, fatigue and other problems.

[0025] Various modifications will become possible for those skilled in the art after receiving the teachings of the present disclosure without departing from the scope thereof.

Claims

1. In a heat control device, a variable-phase substance exhibiting a property of an insulator or a property of metal in a high temperature phase or a low temperature phase, respectively, and radiating a great amount of heat or a small amount of heat in the low temperature phase or the high temperature phase, respectively, controls a temperature of an object (2). 15
2. A heat control device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said variable-phase substance comprises an oxide of perovskite Mn. 20
3. A heat control device as claimed in claim 1 or 2, where in the oxide of perovskite Mn comprises an oxide of Mn-containing perovskite represented by $A_{1-x}B_xMnO_3$ where A is at least one of La, Pr, Nd and Sm rare earth ions, and B is at least one of Ca, Sr and Ba alkaline rare earth ions. 25
4. A heat control device as claimed in claim 1, wherein said variable-phase substance comprises an oxide of Cr-containing corundum vanadium. 30
5. A heat control device as claimed in claim 1 or 4, wherein said variable-phase substance comprises $(V_{1-x}Cr_x)_2O_3$. 35
6. A heat control device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said variable-phase substance is affixed to the object (2) by powder coating, evaporation, crystalline adhesion or adhesion of a film (1) formed of a variable-phase substance containing a binder. 40
7. A heat control device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, further comprising either one of a plate and a film (4) mounted on said phase-variable substance for transmitting infrared rays and reflecting visible rays. 45
8. A heat control device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the object (2) comprises either one of an artificial satellite and a spacecraft. 50
9. In a method of controlling a temperature of an object (2), a variable-phase substance exhibiting a property of an insulator or a property of metal in a high temperature phase or a low temperature phase, respectively, and radiating a great amount of

heat or a small amount of heat in the low temperature phase or the high temperature phase, respectively, is affixed to said object (2).

- 5 10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein said variable-phase substance comprises either one of an oxide of perovskite Mn and an oxide of Cr-containing corundum vanadium.
- 10 11. A method as claimed in claim 9 or 10, wherein the object (2) comprises either one of an artificial satellite and a spacecraft.

Fig. 1

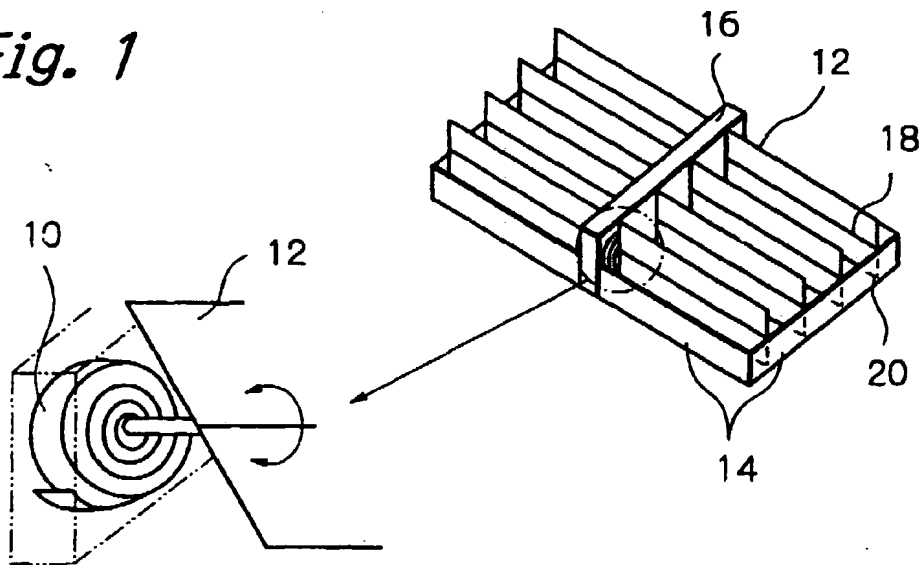


Fig. 2

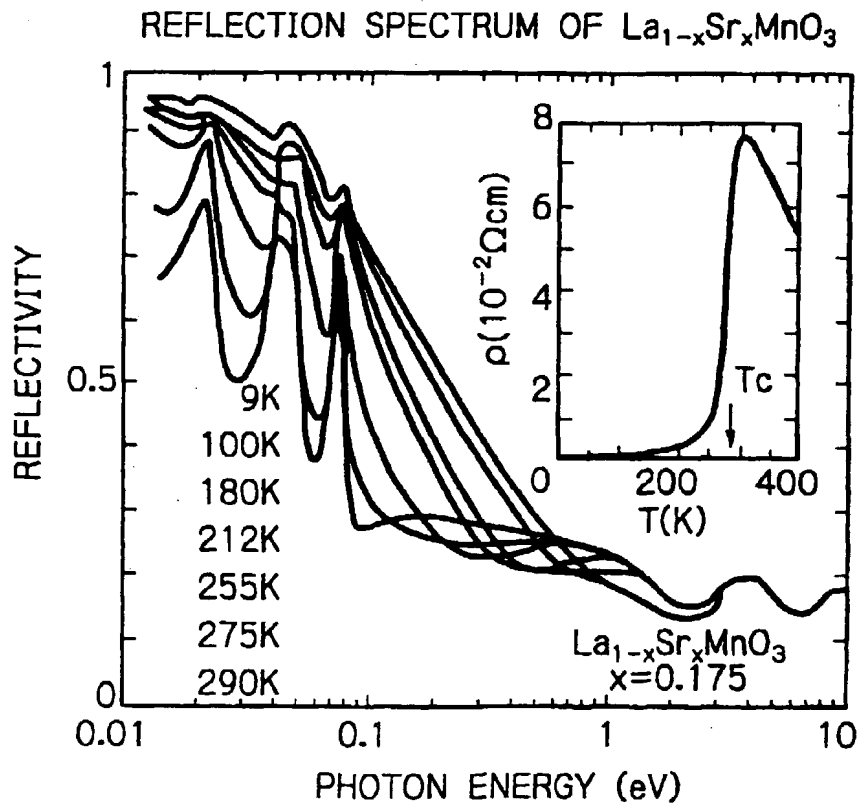


Fig. 3

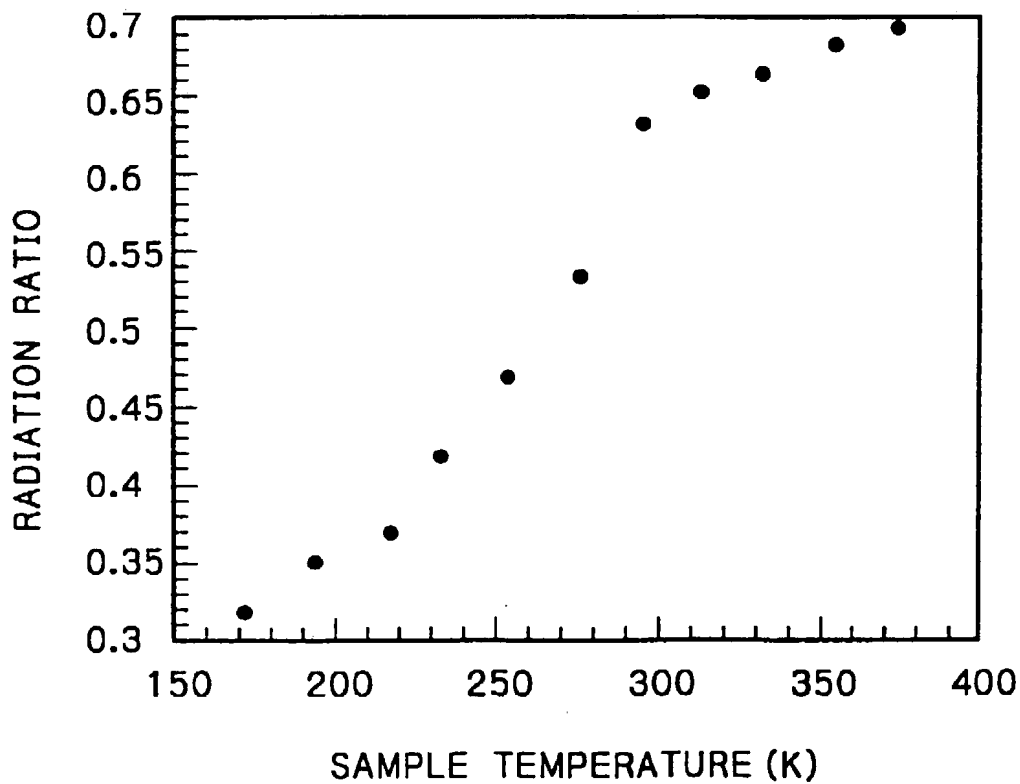


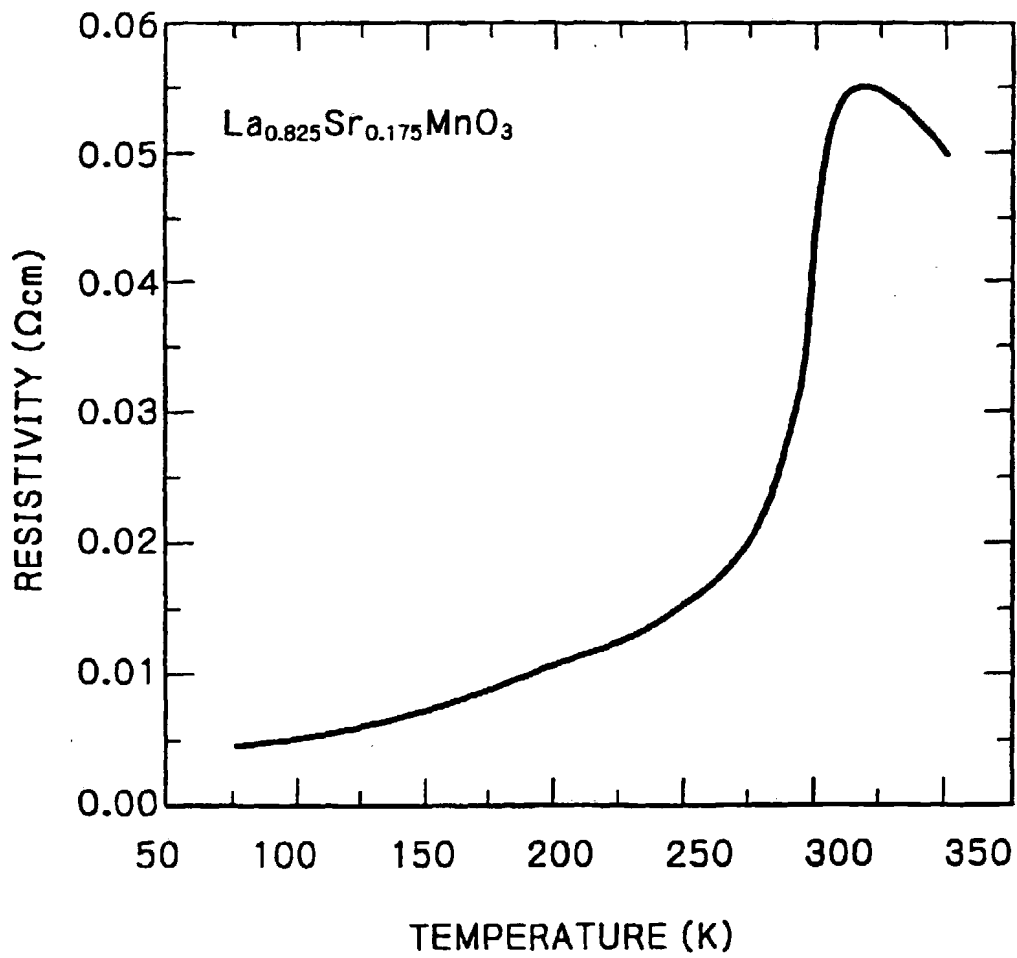
Fig. 4

Fig. 5

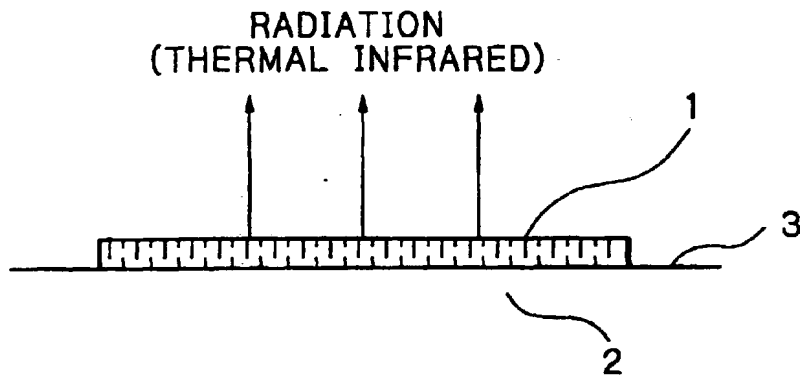
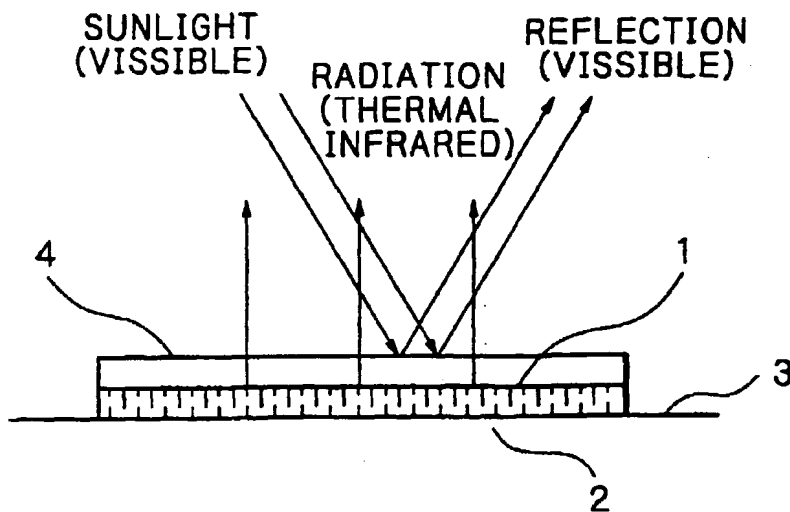


Fig. 6





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 98 12 2377

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			C30B B64G G02F F24J
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search BERLIN		Date of completion of the search 10 February 1999	Examiner Beitner, M
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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BERLIN	10 February 1999	Beitner, M	
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